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**#Press Release No8#**

## **International Conference on the West African Food Security Storage System: Main Conclusions and Recommendations**

The ECOWAS Commission organized, from April 28<sup>th</sup> to May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021, in partnership with the UEMOA Commission and the CILSS executive Secretariat, and under the Republic of Ghana, current Chair of the Authority of the ECOWAS Heads of State, an online international Conference on the West African Food Security Storage System.

For five days, participants exchanged views and discussed various concerns on food security storage such as (i) the vulnerability of West Africa and the Sahel to food and nutrition insecurity, (ii) food reserves and the management of cyclical food, nutrition and pastoral crises in West Africa, (iii) the role of stocks in the promotion of sustainable food systems and the building of a regional food market, (iv) the role of food reserves in the building of resilience and social protection of households and (v) partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms to strengthen the resilience of the regional food storage system and its readiness to effectively face the amplification and complexity of food, nutrition and pastoral crises.

Discussions and experience sharing enabled more than 600 participants from various horizons and food security storage organizations to conclude on several key consensuses as follows:

- the regional food security storage system based on three complementary lines of defense (local, national, and regional) is a relevant and innovative approach that will bring about major changes, both for food security and the strengthening of the region's institutional capacities,
- the results obtained after five years of implementation of the regional food security storage strategy at both local and national levels and the establishment of the regional food security Reserve are encouraging and promising,
- the multi-actors partnership under the aegis of the ECOWAS Commission, which enabled the definition and implementation of the food security storage strategy, is an approach to be encouraged and consolidated,
- the food security storage strategy aimed at strengthening the region's capacity to manage food, nutrition, and pastoral crises, should be based on the following pillars:
  - strengthening of resilience and social protection,
  - commercial storage, structuring of value chains and the fight against price volatility,
  - diversified financing mechanisms, including insurance systems, for financing food storage at all levels,



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- the strategic role of the ECOWAS Commission in coordinating and aligning the interventions of the various stakeholders in the food security storage systems in the region,
- the need to broaden the multilateral partnership by involving the private sector, professional organizations, the International Humanitarian Community, financial and risk insurance institutions in the deployment of the next steps of the implementation of the regional food storage strategy.

To face security challenges, climate variability and human impacts on natural resources, the Conference highlighted the need to implement local, national, and regional initiatives to develop sustainable food systems in West Africa.

In this perspective, humanitarian organizations committed to align themselves with regional initiatives to ensure the coherence and complementarity of the Regional Food Security Reserve and, more broadly, of the food storage system with other instruments for facing food, nutrition, and pastoral crises. FAO called on the International Community and all technical and financial partners to join forces to support the ECOWAS Commission in launching a major program to scale up family or community silos: the "1 million silos for West Africa and the Sahel" initiative. Adding to this call, financial partners are willing to ensure the mobilization of at least US\$1.5 billion to finance infrastructure and food security stocks in the region.

To recall, the general objective of the International Conference is to lay the foundations for a renewed multilateral partnership towards strengthening warning, prevention, intervention, and humanitarian assistance mechanisms for the most vulnerable populations to food, nutrition, and pastoral crises.

The Conference falls within the process of assessing the key achievements of the five-year implementation of the West African Food Security Storage Strategy, with the political support of the G20, financial assistance from the European Union, and technical support from the French Development Agency (AFD) and the Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development (AECID), in collaboration with the UEMOA Commission and CILSS.

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